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Notes on Philippine Birds, 11. New or important records for the Island of Palawan

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Palawan is a slender mountainous island c. 400 km long with an average width of 35 km and a maximum elevation of 2073 m. It lies on the Sunda Shelf in the South China Sea on the western border of the Philippines. The fauna of Palawan is primarily of Southeast Asian and Bornean origin (Dickerson 1928)

and it shares more bird species with these areas than with the remainder of the Philippines.

Blasius (1888), Whitehead (1890) and Delacour & Mayr (1946) have published lists of the birds of Palawan. duPont (1971) incorporated subsequent records, which included a recently discovered species *Stachyris hypogrammica* described by Salomonsen (1961).

In this report, we present 12 sight records and 3 specimen records of birds previously unrecorded from Palawan. For some migrants and some widely distributed species, these records substantiate what was already suspected regarding their occurrence on the island. We also provide 9 additional records of species known from only a few specimens (many of which records were previously unpublished), ringing records or previous sightings. P. and E. Glass obtained a large share of these records over a 2-year period, from April 1977 to March 1979, on Palawan. All but one of the unpublished specimen records were added by Gonzales from the collections at the Philippine National Museum. Other records were discovered while Kennedy, Dickinson and M. Levin joined P. and E. Glass on field trips in Palawan.

Species accounts

In the accounts below, we have abbreviated the names of the persons who sighted or collected the recent records: E. Dickinson (ED), E. Glass (EG), P. Glass (PG), R. Kennedy (RK) and Michael Levin (ML); and the names of museums: American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), Philippine National Museum (PNM), and Wildlife Collection, College of Forestry, University of the Philippines at Los Banos (WC-UPLB). All Km readings on roads refer to the Km posts on the Philippine National Highway. When we use the term "winter" we mean the northern winter. The taxonomy and English names of the species of birds follows King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975).

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Between 20 and 22 Dec 1978, PG and EG sighted 16 Little Grebes at Lake Danao, a large, deep freshwater lake in Taytay municipality, northern Palawan. At least 8 were adults with cheeks, sides of necks and throats shiny rufous, the others having buffy cheeks and necks probably being young of the year. Sighted singly or in pairs (twice), swimming and diving in the deep, clearer parts of the lake.

Remarks. First records for Palawan and probably *T.r. philippensis*, which occurs in the northern Philippines and is not known to migrate (Vaurie 1965). Probably a breeding resident on Palawan.

ORIENTAL DARTER *Anhinga melanogaster*

PG and EG saw at least 15 individuals, all in adult plumage, between 20 and 22 Dec 1978 on Lake Danao.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Probably an uncommon breeding resident.

GREAT BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

PG saw 5 on 14 Feb 1979 in a freshwater marsh near Km 57,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa. All were in adult plumage and were identified by their large size, brown and black mottling on their backs, and by their characteristic bittern behaviour of "freezing" with upturned bills after landing in tall reeds.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Only one previous record from the Philippines, a specimen collected at Laguna de Bay, Luzon on 12 Mar 1905

(McGregor 1905). Presumably *B.s. stellaris* and a rare winter visitor to Palawan.

YELLOW BITTERN *Ixobrychus sinensis*

PG and EG identified one in adult plumage on 21 Dec 1978 at Lake Danao.

Remarks. Individuals have been ringed at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa: 1965(7), 1968(2), 1969(2) (McClure & Leelavit 1972). Subspecies and status uncertain.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

PG and EG sighted 10 individuals on 28 Sep 1978 (with RK) in newly planted rice fields at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa at Km 27,S; 10 on 3 Oct 1978 on the mudflats along the seashore at the end of the airport runway in Puerto Princesa; 11 on 12 Oct 1978, 2 on 1 Nov 1978 and 2 on 13 Jan 1979 (with ED and ML) in fishponds 1 km E of Km 14,N in Tagburos, Puerto Princesa; and c. 40 on 14 Jan 1979 near fishponds at Km 21,S at Iwahig. All birds were in winter plumage.

Remarks. Previously known in Palawan from only 2 specimen records: 1 collected 4 Apr 1932 from the Malampaya River (Dupond 1942); and 1 unpublished record (PNM 14188) collected 6 Mar 1973 from Panacan, Aborlan municipality, by R. Sison and A. Castro. Also known from trapping and ringing records from Iwahig, Puerto Princesa: 1965(2) and 1969(1) (McClure & Leelavit 1972). Delacour & Mayr (1946) list this species only from Cagayancillo in the Palawan group. Subspecies *E.g. garzetta*. Today, a common migrant and probably resident.

GREAT EGRET *Egretta alba*

PG, EG and RK saw 4 on 28 Sep 1978 in rice fields near Km 27,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa, and PG, EG, ED and ML saw 2 more there on 14 Jan 1979. PG and EG saw 1 on 12 Oct 1978 and 1 on 1 Nov 1978 at the fishponds near Km 14,N at Tagburos, Puerto Princesa; and 3 on 21 Dec 1978 at Lake Danao. All birds were in winter plumage.

Remarks. Previously known from one unpublished specimen record (M. LeCroy, AMNH 782990) from Palawan collected 17 May 1962 by J. Ramos. Believed to be *E.a. modesta* as this is the only subspecies known from Asia (Vaurie 1965) and the Philippines (duPont 1971). Evidently an uncommon winter visitor to Palawan.

WANDERING WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna arcuata*

PG and EG sighted 15 on 21 Dec 1978 at Lake Danao and a flock of at least 80 on 9 Feb 1979 at a freshwater marsh c. 4 km N of Km 53,S at Inagawan, Puerto Princesa. PG and EG bought one immature female (now in WC-UPLB) on 9 Feb 1979 from a resident of Inagawan who had captured it 2 months earlier.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. *D.a. arcuata*. Apparently a common resident in favourable habitat.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

PG and EG identified 14 (5 appeared to be immatures) on 16 Oct 1978 and PG, EG, ED and ML saw 2 on 13 Jan 1979 at fishponds near Km 14,N in Tagburos, Puerto Princesa.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Appears to be an uncommon winter visitor.

CHINESE GOSHAWK *Accipiter soloensis*

PG, EG and RK sighted 2 (1 adult and 1 tentatively identified immature) on

28 Sep 1978 in a small clearing adjacent to primary forest 500 m NW of the Palawan Construction Mining Corporation (PCMC) mining road near Irahwan, Puerto Princesa. Both birds were feeding on a large swarm of hovering insects that appeared to be small bees. They flew through the swarm and caught the insects in their feet. All field marks of the adult were noted including the diagnostic pattern of the underside of the wing – white inner primaries and secondaries contrasting with the blackish outer primaries. The immature was identical with the adult in size, in colour of the upperparts and tarsus, and in flight and feeding behaviour. It differed by having a yellow cere, dark iris, a mesial stripe, rufous-streaked breast, barred abdomen and flanks and a more finely barred tail.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Apparently an uncommon winter migrant.

RUFIOUS-BELLIED EAGLE *Hieraaetus kieneri*

PG and EG saw 2, believed to be a mated pair, soaring and diving into the primary forest between 27 and 30 Jan 1979 at 700 m on the west slope of Cleopatra's Needle Mountain in Puerto Princesa municipality. One repeatedly perched on an exposed branch near the top of a steep ridge c. 70 m from the trail to their camp-site. Both birds called several times with a double note, high pitched scream "kree-kree" preceded by 1-2 short "kuk-kuk" notes.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Believed to be *H.k. formosus* and an uncommon resident on Palawan.

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

PG and EG saw 1 on 3 Aug 1978 in primary lowland forest at Panablan, St Paul's Subterranean River National Park, Puerto Princesa; and PG, EG, ED and ML sighted 1 on 15 Jan 1979 flying over primary forest near Km 68,N at Caliquasan, San Rafael, Puerto Princesa. Both birds were adults in the dark plumage phase.

Remarks. An unknown number of specimens of this species were collected by J. Whitehead (Sharpe 1888) and Dr Platen (Blasius 1888). Whitehead (1890) reported it to be "scarce". A single specimen was taken by duPont (Meyer de Schauensee & duPont 1959) on 25 July 1958 in Puerto Princesa. Also known from 2 previously unpublished specimen records: 1 (PNM 6922) collected 11 May 1963 in the municipality of Quezon by P. Gonzales and M. Celestino; and 1 (PNM 8532) taken 15 Mar 1967 on Mt Victoria, Aborlan by G. Alcasid, P. Gonzales and J. Ramos.

COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

PG and EG saw 1 on 21 Dec 1978 at Lake Danao and at least 12 on 14 Feb 1979 at the freshwater marsh near Km 57,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa.

Remarks. Only 4 previous records for Palawan: 1 ringed at Iwahig in 1967 (McClure & Leelavit 1972); 2 unpublished specimen records (PNM 9021, 9022) collected 15 Mar 1968 from Marble, Mt Cabayungan by P. Gonzales and J. Ramos; and one published record of *G.c. lozanoi* taken at Iwahig during May 1970 (Amadon & duPont 1970).

EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra*

PG and EG sighted 1 on 21 Dec 1978 on Lake Danao.

Remarks. First record for Palawan. Probably *F.a. atra* as this subspecies is widespread in Asia and some northern birds migrate to Luzon (Vaurie 1965). Clearly an uncommon migrant to Palawan.

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

PG, EG and RK saw 6 on 27 and 28 Sep 1978 in rice fields at Km 21,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa. PG, EG, ED and ML observed 5 on 14 Jan 1979 on mudflats near the fishpond complex at Km 20,S at Iwahig. One bird in Sep was subadult, the rest were adults.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Subspecific status is uncertain as both *H.b. himantopus* and *H.b. leucocephalus* have been recorded from other islands in the Philippines. Although not previously reported, Gonzales saw this species in suitable habitat at Iwahig long before these sightings. We now have records during the months of Jan, Feb, May, July and Sep at Iwahig, which suggests that it might be breeding there.

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatalis*

PG, EG and RK saw 25 on 27 Sep 1978 in a freshly planted rice field at Km 27,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa. PG and EG observed 30 on 12 Oct 1978, 5 on 15 Oct 1978, and 5 on 26 Oct 1978 on mudflats near the fishponds at Km 14,N at Tagburos, Puerto Princesa; and 3 on 14 Jan 1979 on the mudflats at a large fishpond near Km 20,S at Iwahig. All birds were in winter plumage.

Remarks. Previously known only from birds trapped and ringed at Iwahig: 1965(1), 1966(1), 1967(2), 1968(1), 1969(1), and 1970(14) (McClure & Leelavit 1972). Evidently an uncommon migrant to Palawan.

COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Flocks of 10-35 in winter plumage seen on 10 occasions between 13 Jan 1978 and 20 Jan 1979 at the fishponds near Tagburos and Iwahig, Puerto Princesa and in rice fields at Km 27,S at Iwahig. All observers were present on one or more of the occasions.

Remarks. Known from one previously unpublished specimen record (PNM 13287) collected 30 Sep 1969 from Iwahig by T. Oane and from birds trapped and ringed at Iwahig: 1965(2), 1966(4), 1967(2), 1968(1), 1969(1), 1970(2) (McClure & Leelavit 1972).

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus lobatus*

PG and EG observed at least 30 on 7 Sep 1978 c. 1 km from shore in Ulugan Bay, northwestern Palawan; 1 on 27 Sep 1978 (with RK) in a rice field at Km 27,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa; and at least 70 on 6 Oct 1978 c. 2 km from shore in Honda Bay near Puerto Princesa. All birds were in winter plumage.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Probably a common offshore winter visitor.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

PG, EG and RK observed 1 on 27 Sep 1978 in a rice field at Km 27,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa. The bird was moulting from the breeding plumage.

Remarks. Fifth record for Palawan: 4 previously unpublished specimen records from Iwahig, all collected by T. Oane: 1 during September 1966 (PNM 8178); 1 on 30 Sep 1969 (PNM 13304); 1 on 30 Apr 1970 (PNM 13332); and 1 on 11 May 1970 (PNM 14862). Seemingly an uncommon to common migrant to Palawan.

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

PG and EG sighted 2 on 20 Feb 1978 near the Puerto Princesa City pier; 1 on 16 Oct 1978 at the fishponds at Tagburos, Puerto Princesa; and 1 on

14 Jan 1979 (with ED and ML) at the fishpond complex near Km 20,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa. All birds were in winter plumage.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Believed to be an uncommon winter visitor.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*

PG, EG and RK observed 1 on 28 Sep 1978 flying over a fishpond near Km 20,S at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa. Another was seen by PG and EG on 7 Nov 1978 flying over an open field near the P.C.M.C. mining road turn-off at Km 17,S at Iwahig.

Remarks. Known from one previously unpublished specimen (*H.d. striolata*) (PNM 13309) from Iwahig, collected 25 Apr 1969 by T. Oane, and from birds trapped and ringed at Iwahig: 1965(4), 1967(4) (McClure & Leelavitt 1972). Probably passage migrants.

SIBERIAN BLUE ROBIN *Erithacus cyane*

PG and EG collected 1 female (*E.c. bochaiensis*) (PNM 16299) on 27 Jan 1979 in primary forest at 750 m along the west ridge of Cleopatra's Needle Mountain, Puerto Princesa municipality. Before it was netted, they observed it hopping along the forest floor and to and from the ground to low branches. It gave low weak call notes "chek, chek . . ." at 1-second intervals.

Remarks. First record for Palawan and fourth record for the Philippines. Considered a rare winter visitor.

NARCISSUS FLYCATCHER *Ficedula narcissina*

PG and EG sighted 1 male and collected 1 female (*F.n. narcissina*) (PNM 16298) in non-breeding condition on 28 Jan 1979 in montane forest at 1140 m on Cleopatra's Needle Mountain, Puerto Princesa municipality.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Believed to be an uncommon winter resident.

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa latirostris*

PG, EG, ED and ML observed 1 from 10 m on 14 Jan 1979 in primary forest at 690 m on Mt Beaufort, Puerto Princesa municipality. They clearly saw the uniform grey breast band (without mottling) and faint eye-ring that distinguishes this species from *M. sibirica*.

Remarks. First record for Palawan. Subspecies not identified, but it was clearly not *M.l. randi*, which is endemic to Luzon and Negros. Considered a rare winter visitor.

EURASIAN TREE-SPARROW *Passer montanus*

PG and EG found this species to be well established in Puerto Princesa and at other locations within the city limits from Nov 1977 to Feb 1979. They located numerous nests with eggs, nestlings, and attendant adults in the Puerto Princesa Cathedral throughout the year.

Remarks. First records for Palawan. Subspecies uncertain.

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IN BRIEF

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16 July 1986

Graham Cowles
Secretary

Books Received

Brosset, A. & Erard, C. 1986. *Les Oiseaux des Régions Forestières du Nord-est du Gabon*. Vol. 1. Ecologie et comportement des espèces. Pp. 297. 54 black-and-white photographs. Société Nationale de Protection de la Nature, Paris. 200FF (250FF outside France), paperback. 16 x 24 cm.

The book covers the Makokou-Belingia area, which involves the upper basin of the River